

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2155

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TAGS: SOCI, UR

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS - JEWISH WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS'

REQUEST FOR USG INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF SOVIET PRISONERS

OF CONSCIENCE

SUMMARY - REPS OF TEN NATIONAL JEWISH WOMEN'S ORGS CALLED ON AMB FERGUSON AND CONGRESSMAN BUCHANAN TO URGE USG INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF JEWISH "PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE" IN USSR AND ON BEHALF OF SOVIET JEWS WISHING TO EMIGRATE. AMB FERGUSON ASSURED THEM OF USG'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO THIS CAUSE. HE EXPLAINED THAT PRESENT POLICY UNDER CONDITIONS OF DETENTE WAS TO USE QUIET DIPLOMACY RATHER THAN CONFRONTATION AND THAT FORMER TACTIC WAS CLEARLY ACHIEVING GREATER SUCCESS THAN LATTER. HE SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT ASSISTANCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGS COULD ALSO BE ENLISTED. CONG BUCHANAN, WHILE SUPPORTING ADMINISTRATION POSITION ON DETENTE, THOUGHT THAT CONGRESS WAS ALSO PLAYING USEFUL ROLE BY CONTINUING TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON BEHALF SOVIET JEWS. HE STATED HE PERSONALLY WILLING TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE ON THEIR BEHALF. END SUMMARY.

1. DELEGATION OF FOLLOWING LEADERS AND TOP STAFF MEM-

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BERS OF JEWISH WOMEN'S ORGS CALLED ON AMB FERGUSON AND

CONGRESSMAN JOHN BUCHANAN, PUBLIC MEMBER OF USDEL TO 28TH GA, TO PLEAD FOR USG INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF JEWISH PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE IN SOVIET UNION: MRS. JACQUELINE LEVINE - AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS - WOMEN'S DIVISION; MRS. RUTH DOLKART - NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN; MRS. JEAN THEODORE - NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE SISTERHOODS; MRS. SAMUEL TURK - UNION OF ORTHODOX JEWISH CONGREGATIONS - WOMEN'S BRANCH; MRS. ELLA BERMAN - WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATION JUDAISM; MRS. CHARLOTTE STEIN - PIONEER WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION; MRS. JOCELYN CHAIT - B'NAI B'RITH WOMEN; MS. SHEILA WOODS, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER, NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOVIET JEWRY; MRS. C. SCHREIBER - MIZRACHI WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA; MRS. BETTY TELBER, JEWISH LABOR COMMITTEE; STAFF: MRS. ESTHER KOLATCH - AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS-WOMEN'S DIVISION; MRS. SHOSHANNA EBSTEIN, WOMEN'S AMERICAN ORT; MRS. ELLEN R. BAYER, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN.

2. SPOKESWOMAN JACQUELINE LEVINE EXPLAINED THAT THEY HAD COME TO PLEAD FOR AMNESTY FOR MORE THAN 40 JEWS IMPRISONED FOR ZIONIST ACTIVITIES IN USSR AND TO ASK USG TO RAISE THIS ISSUE FORMALLY AND INFORMALLY WITH SOVIET AUTHORITIES. CITING NEW WAVE OF PERSECUTION, SHE STATED THAT SOVIET JEWS REQUESTING EXIT VISAS ARE BEING HELD AND TRIED ON TRUMPED-UP CHARGES. THESE CHARGES ARE NOW USUALLY OF A CRIMINAL RATHER THAN A POLITICAL NATURE AS IN THE PAST, SO AS TO CONCEAL REAL NATURE OF THEIR ALLEGED OFFENSES. HER GROUP WAS CONCERNED ON TWO COUNTS -- NOT ONLY WERE THEY ANXIOUS TO ASSURE RIGHT OF JEWS TO CONTINUE TO EMIGRATE IF THEY WISHED, BUT ALSO RIGHT OF JEWS TO CONTINUE TO LIVE AS JEWS IN THE USSR. SHE CITED PREVIOUS CALLS MADE BY REPS OF JEWISH WOMEN'S ORGS ON AMB. BUSH AND PHILIP HOFFMAN, US REP ON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (HRC). SHE THEN INTRODUCED SHIMON LEVITT, RECENT EMIGRE, WHO SERVED TWO-YEAR SENTENCE IN LABOR CAMP FOR TEACHING HEBREW.

3. LEVITT BRIEFLY DESCRIBED CONDITIONS IN THOSE CAMPS AND SAID THAT WHILE AMNESTY WAS FIRST OBJECTIVE, SINCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IT WOULD SOLVE PROBLEM COMPLETELY, A MORE IMMEDIATE ONE WAS TO AMELIORATE THOSE CONDITIONS.

3. OTHER VISITORS INTRODUCED THEMSELVES AND SOME MADE ADDITIONAL POINTS. RUTH DOLKART DESCRIBED HOW ORGS REPRESENTED AT MEETING HAD MOBILIZED ONE MILLION MEN AND WOMEN BOTH JEWS AND NON-JEWS, AND HAD PERSUADED VARIOUS GOVERNORS AND MAYORS TO DESIGNATE LAST DECEMBER 10, WHICH MARKED

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AS DAY OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR SOVIET JEWS. SHE URGED THAT AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING OF HRC INCLUDE ITEM ON PLIGHT OF SOVIET JEWRY. ELLA BERMAN STATED THAT US MUST CONTINUE PRESSURE, BECAUSE IF IT DESISTED USSR WOULD CEASE TO ALLOW JEWISH EMIGRATION.

4. CONGRESSMAN BUCHANAN EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD VISITED USSR LAST YEAR AND HAD HEARD SUCH COMPLAINTS FIRST-HAND. HE ASSURED VISITORS OF HIS FULL SYMPATHY AND STATED THAT THEY COULD QUOTE HIM AS SAYING HE WAS WILLING TO DO EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER TO HELP.

5. AMB. FERGUSON REMINDED HIS LISTENERS THAT USG HAD BEEN WORKING ON THIS PROBLEM SINCE 1963 AND THAT PRESENT USG POSITION REPRESENTED NOT CHANGE IN COMMITMENT BUT ONLY IN TECHNIQUES. HE EXPLAINED THAT USSR WILL NOT ACCEPT INTERFERENCE IN ITS INTERNAL AFFAIRS, A POINT GROMYKO REITERATED IN HIS SPEECH TO 28TH GA. IT IS NOW USG VIEW THAT MORE CAN BE ACHIEVED BY QUIET DIPLOMACY THAN BY PUBLICLY PRESSURING USSR, AND CONTINUING EXODUS OF JEWS FROM USSR WOULD APPEAR TO CONFIRM THAT JUDGMENT. HE ADDED THAT IN LAST YEAR UNDER POLICY OF DETENTE USG HAS MADE MORE APPROACHES TO USSR ON SUBJECT OF SOVIET JEWRY THAN IN PRECEDING FIVE YEARS.

6. CONGRESSMAN BUCHANAN ASSURED THE GROUP THAT HE THOUGHT DETENTE HAD PROVED ITS WORTH AND THAT ADMINISTRATION POSITION WAS CORRECT. HOWEVER, HE ALSO THOUGHT IT USEFUL FOR CONGRESS TO KEEP UP PRESSURE AND THAT HE HIMSELF HAD VOTED FOR JACKSON AMENDMENT.

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7. ELLEN BERMAN ASKED IF RIGHT OF SOVIET JEWS TO EMIGRATE WOULD BE ON AGENDA OF HRC. AMB FERGUSON REPLIED THAT THE ITEM HAD LAPSED AND WOULD NOT THEREFORE BE INCLUDED AUTOMATICALLY. CONGRESSMAN BUCHANAN SUGGESTED THAT CONGRESS COULD PASS RESOLUTION URGING USG TO HAVE IT INCLUDED AND GROUP PROMPTLY AGREED TO ORGANIZE IMMEDIATE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION CAMPAIGN TO ACHIEVE THAT END. SHEILA WOOD THEN ASKED WHAT COULD BE DONE ABOUT FATE OF PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE IN USSR. IN REPLY AMB FERGUSON RECALLED THAT PUBLIC USG CRITICISM OF USSR POLICY RE POLITICAL PRISONERS HAD BEEN PART OF COLD WAR PARAPHENALIA AND AS SUCH WAS TAINTED AND NOT EFFECTIVE. HE DOUBTED IF DEPT OF STATE WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO ENGAGING IN SUCH PUBLIC CRITICISM, SINCE SOVIETS WOULD HASTEN TO DENOUNCE IT AS "BLATANT INTERVENTION" IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND IT WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. HE SUGGESTED THAT EXTRA-GOVERNMENTAL ORGS WOULD SERVE USEFUL PURPOSE OF KEEPING UP PRESSURE WHEN USG FOR OVERRIDING REASONS COULD NOT. HE CITED SUCCESS OF INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS (ICJ) IN SENDING OBSERVERS TO SOUTH AFRICAN TERRORISM TRIALS AND SUGGESTED THAT ICJ, WHICH IS HEADQUARTERED IN GENEVA, WAS RESOURCE THAT HAD NOT BEEN FULLY UTILIZED. HE REMINDED HIS LISTENERS THAT IF THEY WERE GOING TO TAKE ACTION BEFORE HRC AGENDA JELLED, THEY WOULD HAVE TO ACT BEFORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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JANUARY 10.

8. LEVINE, CITING LOSS OF PACKAGES SENT PRISONERS, ASKED IF THERE WAS NO RECOURSE AGAINST SOVIET GOVERNMENT UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW. AMB FERGUSON EXPLAINED THAT UNFORTUNATELY THERE WAS NOT, THAT THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS COVERED ONLY PRISONERS OF WAR. LEVINE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT SIGNATURE OF UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SHOULD GIVE SIGNATORIES RIGHT TO INTERFERE WHEN STATES ARE VIOLATING OWN NATIONALS' RIGHTS. AMB FERGUSON EXPRESSED PERSONAL AGREEMENT WITH THAT CONCEPT, BUT POINTED OUT IT WAS NOT YET INTERNATIONAL LAW. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN UN SYSTEM, HOWEVER, ESPECIALLY THE RECEIPT AND PROCESSING OF INDIVIDUAL COMPLAINTS, WERE BEGINNING TO GIVE INDIVIDUALS SOME STATUS VIS-A-VIS THEIR GOVERNMENTS.

9. LEVINE EXPRESSED THANKS FOR MOST CONSTRUCTIVE

AND INFORMATIVE VISIT AND SEVERAL MEMBERS OF GROUP
THANKED HIM IN NAME OF THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL ORGS.
AMB FERGUSON TOLD THEM THAT AMB SCALI HAD WANTED O
MEET WITH THEM AND THAT HE VERY MUCH REGRETTED BEING UNABLE
TO DO SO, BUT THAT, AS THEY ALL KNEW, HIS HEALTH HAD
PRECLUDED IT.
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